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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001198

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: ARMY COUNTS VICTORY IN SALYAN WHILE MAOIST ATTACKS

RESUME, LESS FEROCIOUSLY

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1174

[¶](#)B. KATHMANDU 828

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Malinowski, Reasons 1.5(b),(d)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary. Nepal's army has confirmed that fifty-four Maoists and four Nepalese soldiers were killed during the June 12 clash in Salyan district (Ref A). One general ascribed the army's success to better weapons and training, although other military sources related that the Maoists' ambush occurred while the troops had stopped for a meal and no sentries were on duty. The June 17 Maoist firebombing of the Kathmandu home of a high-ranking army officer was the first violent incident in the capital in six weeks. The Maoists appear to have resumed offensive attacks against the security forces, but on a smaller -- and more opportunistic -- scale. End Summary.

Troops More Highly-Trained, Better Equipped

[¶](#)2. (C) The Royal Nepalese Army's (RNA's) Director of Military Operations (DMO) told DATT June 18 that 54 Maoists had been confirmed killed in the June 12 clash between RNA forces and Maoist insurgents in Salyan district (Reftel). The RNA suffered four fatalities and 31 wounded. A high-ranking RNA officer told Ambassador June 14 that one reason the RNA fared so well in the incident was the presence on the scene of a parachute squad equipped with M-16 assault rifles. The squad was not only better trained and disciplined, but also had more firepower than typical RNA units.

RNA Ambushed at Meal Time

[¶](#)3. (C) According to an RNA source, the June 12 Salyan incident began after one company (about 80 men) stopped in a valley for a meal at around 6 p.m. A "couple hundred" Maoists ambushed the RNA bivouac, taking the high ground all around. (Note: According to source, the RNA did not post sentries. End Note.)

High Casualty Figures Unconfirmed

[¶](#)4. (C) In the immediate aftermath of the incident Nepalese civilian and militaries authorities claimed that the Maoists suffered casualties far in excess of the official 54. The CDO for Salyan district told us June 17 that approximately 150 Maoists were killed in the clash. Far fewer bodies were found, he noted. In explanation, the CDO thought that the Maoists took away their casualties. He quoted a total of four army personnel confirmed killed and sixteen wounded. Life has now returned to normal in Salyan, he added. Separately, the RNA confirmed press reports that in search operations following the incident security forces seized two guns, over one hundred socket bombs, hand grenades and ammunition.

After Pause, Maoists Strike in Capital

[¶](#)5. (C) In the first attack in Kathmandu in more than six weeks, Maoists threw at least half a dozen petrol bombs at the home of RNA Brigadier General Bharat Rayamajhi during the early morning hours of June 17, police sources confirmed. (Note: At present Rayamajhi is detailed to Nepal's new National Security Council. End Note.) Three of the gasoline-filled bottles exploded, but caused only minor damage. The Maoists' last violent attack in the Kathmandu Valley occurred April 26, when insurgents set off a bomb on a bus during their self-declared "general strike" (Ref B).

Two Police Shot near Western Nepal Town

[¶](#)6. (C) According to press reports, the Maoists have also resumed strikes against police targets in built-up areas of western Nepal. At dusk on June 15, Maoists -- some reportedly riding bicycles -- shot and killed two uniformed police officers at a village adjacent to the western city of Nepalganj. A plainclothes officer at the scene escaped harm.

Fifteen minutes later Maoists detonated a bomb at a house five hundred yards away. (Note: Post has received contradictory reports from Nepalgunj about what actually happened. Nepalgunj's Mayor claims that the assailants may have been smugglers and not Maoists. End Note.)

Comment

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17. (C) After a hiatus of nearly a month and a half the Maoists appear to have resumed attacks against military and police targets. Compared to previous "human wave" attacks against police and army installations, recent incidents seem limited in scale and -- as in the case of the ambush at mealtime -- even opportunistic. Although better training and discipline allowed the RNA to repel the Maoists' ambush, the fact that the company commander did not post sentries during the meal attests that adherence to sound operational procedures is still not practiced across the board.

MALINOWSKI